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AUTHOR Cohen, Margaret W.
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ABSTRACT

This paper demonstrates how issues of lifelong development are cogent at the undergraduate level by discussing the results of a study which explored individual differences among the preservice population. Fuller's developmental model of teachers' concerns combined with theories of life-span development provided the conceptual and operational bases for hypothesizing differences in preparing teachers' orientations to the profession, their career goals, and aspirations. In the study, a group of 20 student teachers classified as returning students or adult learners was compared to a matched group of 18 college-aged student teachers. Results reveal that the two groups had different types of expectations, concerns, anxieties, and commitments to teaching. These differences were apparent in data collected before and after student teaching. They demonstrate how socialization into the teaching profession is not only affected by the academic experiences of the preparing teachers, but also by their nonacademic experiences. (Author)

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Teacher Concerns: Developmental Changes in Preservice Teachers

Margaret W. Cohen

Department of Behavioral Studies

University of Missouri - St. Louis

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ABSTRACT

This paper demonstrates how issues of lifelong development are cogent at the undergraduate level by discussing the results of a study which explored individual differences among the preservice population. Fuller's developmental model of teachers' concerns combined with theories of life-span development provided the conceptual and operational bases for hypothesizing differences in preparing teachers' orientations to the profession, their career goals, and aspirations. In the study a group of student teachers classified as returning students or adult learners was compared to a matched group of college-aged student teachers. Results reveal that the two groups had different types of expectations, concerns, anxieties, and commitments to teaching. These differences were apparent in data collected before and after student teaching. They demonstrate how socialization into the teaching profession is not only affected by the academic experiences of the preparing teachers, but also their nonacademic experiences.

The primary goal for this study was to learn which characteristics of preparing teachers influence their socialization into the teaching profession. Instead of being responsive to individual differences among their trainees, preservice teaching programs, like other professional preparation programs, are designed to prepare students, in general, for the profession. One assumption of this study is that socialization into the profession of teaching is affected by the nonacademic experiences of preparing teachers. By learning which experiences contribute to the socialization process, teacher education programs can be more responsive to the needs of their preparing students. An objective of this study is to examine some of the differences among preparing teachers by combining a life-span developmental perspective with various models of teacher career development. Specifically, the study reported here examines differences in preservice teachers' concerns about teaching at two different phases of their training.

Theoretical Framework

Becoming a teacher is regarded now as the initial step in the continuing development of teachers. A number of researchers are studying the processes involved in professional maturation. Three lines of research have been particularly fruitful. One approach employs various theories of development including cognitive style (Harvey, Hunt & Schroder, 1961), moral development (Kohlberg, 1968), and ego development (Loevinger, 1976) to enhance the professional growth of teachers. This approach is spearheaded by Sprinthall at the University of Minnesota (Glassberg & Sprinthall, 1980; Oja, Note 1; Oja & Sprinthall, 1978; Bernier & Sprinthall, 1975). A second approach, under the leadership of Ryan at Ohio State University, has inductively generated patterns of teacher career development (Applegate & Lasley, Note 2; Newman, Note 3; Peterson, Note 4; Ryan, Note 5) from interviews with teachers with

varying degrees of experience. The third approach is based on the theoretical work of Fuller (Fuller, 1969; Fuller & Bown, 1975) who was one of the first researchers to study the changes in teachers' preoccupations, or concerns, as they acquire experience in the classroom setting. Each approach contributes uniquely to our knowledge base for preservice and inservice education. Yet, each approach is still evolving and, consequently, is attentive only to a small segment of the process of teacher education. There is a need not only for interaction among the three approaches, but also for interaction with a fourth perspective, that of theories of development throughout the life-span (Gould, 1972; Levinson, 1978; Neugarten, 1968; Sheehy, 1976).

Life-span developmental theories compel us to ask how passage through the stages or phases of teacher career development is affected by the life-stage or age of the teacher. Statistics on today's college-aged population indicate that one-third of the college students nationwide are over 25 years of age (Smith, Note 6). Today's education majors reflect this fact which raises questions about whether preservice programs are as adequately designed to meet the professional developmental needs of a 35 year old as they are to meet the needs of the 22 year old. The continuing research of which this study is a part is designed to explore issues of career development within the life-span developmental perspective.

Specifically, differences in preparing teachers' orientations to the profession and their career goals and aspirations were examined. Two groups of preservice teachers at different life stages were identified and compared. The focus of this presentation employs Fuller's developmental formulation of teacher concerns to examine differences between preservice teachers who fit into the college student-aged population and preservice teachers who can be classified as returning students or adult learners.

Fuller postulates that there are three stages of learning to teach. In the first beginning teachers are preoccupied with their own adequacies in the classroom. They want to be accepted by their pupils and colleagues and to be evaluated favorably by their superiors. The second stage is characterized by concerns about the pressures and tasks of teaching like class size, noninstructional duties, and institutional rigidity. Third stage concerns focus on the scholastic and affective impact that teachers can have on pupils. Data from Fuller and others (Adams, Hutchinson & Martray, Note 7; Adams & Martray, Note 8; Cooperstein, Note 9) demonstrate in support of the model that the concerns of preservice and beginning teachers differ from those of inservice teachers. The supporting data, however, is usually cross-sectional and the pattern of progression through the three stages often reveals that even inexperienced teachers are more concerned about pupil impact variables (stage 3) than they are about classroom tasks (stage 2). It is hypothesized that the pattern may be influenced by where a teacher is in his or her own personal development. For example, a student returning to school having raised a family may be more concerned than the college-aged student about the impact she is having on others' children, or, the student who is entering teaching after a career in sales may have more self-confidence and fewer self concerns than his younger peers. Questions like these guided the present investigation's study of differences between two groups of student teachers prior to and at the completion of student teaching.

Procedures

Participants

Participants in the study were education majors at an urban Midwestern university. Twenty preservice teachers who were at least thirty years old were identified. A second group of college-aged pre-service teachers were

matched to the first group on the basis of their sex and their declared major teaching discipline (elementary, special, secondary math, etc.). All participants were involved in the study during the semester in which they completed the student teaching phase of the certification program. Of those invited to participate in the study, twenty older adults and eighteen college-aged students (five men and 33 women) agreed to participate. The mean age of the younger group was 22.8 years. The mean age of the older group was 37.5 years. Data was collected during the Fall, 1981 and Spring, 1982 academic semesters.

Data Collection

Individual interviews were conducted with each preservice teacher prior to and at the completion of the student teaching experience. At the beginning of the interviews, students completed the Teacher Concerns Checklist - Form B developed by Fuller and her colleagues (George, Note 10, Note 11; George, Borich & Fuller, Note 12). This checklist is a 56-item Likert-type questionnaire which assesses the degree to which respondents are concerned about issues related to teaching. Examples are "whether the students really like me or not" and "clarifying the limits of my authority and responsibility." Subjects respond on a 5-point scale with a score of one indicating "no concern at all" and a score of five indicating "extreme concern." The results of the analyses of these data are the focus of this presentation.

The remainder of this interview was guided by a schedule of questions relevant to either beginning or completing the student teaching phase of the teacher training program. Each schedule was designed to assess the factors influencing the student's conceptualization of teaching at both phases of the program and to assess the student's perceptions of his or her successes and failures during the semester. Each interview was 60 to 90 minutes in length.

Each was audio recorded and transcribed. For this presentation the data from these intensive interviews were used to supplement the results of the Teacher Concerns Checklist analyses.

Data Analysis

Scales were constructed from the 56 items on the questionnaire using the three factors hypothesized by Fuller (1969; Fuller & Bown, 1975) and identified by George (Note 10, Note 11): (1) concerns about self as teacher, (2) concerns about the tasks in teaching, and (3) concerns about the impact of teaching on learners. Scales were also constructed according to six factors identified by Adams et al. (Note 7, Note 8): (1) self concerns about adult perceptions and evaluations, (2) self concerns about pupil perceptions, (3) task concerns as related to instruction, (4) task concerns as related to classroom discipline, (5) impact concerns as related to academics, and (6) impact concerns as related to school environmental influences. These scales are composed of items listed in Tables 1 and 2.

Analyses were completed using these scales as well as individual items to examine differences between the concerns of the college-aged and the older adult student teachers and to examine changes that occurred in each group as a function of student teaching. Analyses of variance and t-tests for dependent groups were used depending on the appropriate comparison. Repeated measures analyses of variance were also conducted to assess whether the changes on the concerns scales were a function of the interaction between testing trials and the independent variable, age.

Table 1

ITEMS IN THE CONCERNS FACTORS IDENTIFIED BY GEORGE

Self Concerns

Doing well when a supervisor is present
Feeling more adequate as a teacher
Being accepted and respected by professional persons
Getting a favorable evaluation of my teaching
Maintaining the appropriate degree of class control

Task Concerns

Lack of instructional materials
Feeling under pressure too much of the time
Working with too many students each day
Too many noninstructional duties
The routine and inflexibility of the situation

Impact Concerns

Meeting the needs of different kinds of students
Diagnosing student learning problems
Challenging unmotivated students
Guiding students toward intellectual and emotional growth
Whether each student is getting what he (or she) needs

Table 2

ITEMS IN THE CONCERNS FACTORS IDENTIFIED BY ADAMS ET AL.

Self Concerns

About Pupil Perceptions

Whether the students really like me or not
Acceptance as a friend by students
How students feel about me

About Adult Perceptions
Doing well when a supervisor is present
Getting a favorable evaluation of my teaching
Being accepted and respected by professional persons

Task Concerns

As Related to Instruction
Feeling under pressure too much of the time
The routine and inflexibility of the situation
Becoming too personally involved with students
Working with too many students each day
Lack of academic freedom

As Related to Classroom Discipline
Lack of respect of some students
Maintaining the appropriate degree of class control
The values and attitudes of the current generation
Students who disrupt class

Impact Concerns

As Related to Academics
Meeting the needs of different kinds of students
Diagnosing student learning problems
Challenging unmotivated students
Guiding students toward intellectual and emotional growth
Whether each student is getting what he (or she) needs

As Related to School Environmental Influences
Student health and nutrition problems that affect learning
The psychological climate of the school
Chronic absence and dropping out of students
Student use of drugs

Results

Factors Identified by George

The mean scores for the self concerns, task concerns, and impact concerns are shown in Table 3 for both groups of student teachers prior to and after student teaching. There were no differences between the two groups prior to student teaching. After completion of student teaching the college aged group had significantly higher self concerns than the older group [$F(1, 36)=6.00$, $p < .02$]. This may be explained by the significant decrease in the self concerns of the older adult group after student teaching [$t_d(19)=2.93$, $p < .009$]. The results of the repeated measures analysis of variance showed significant main effects for age (college vs. older adult) and time (pre vs. post) and for the age X time interaction term [$F(1, 36)=4.71$, $p < .04$] indicating that the differences between the two groups of student teachers are over and above those differences due to repeated testing.

Factors Identified by Adams

The mean scores for the six factors identified by Adams et al. (Note 7, Note 8) are shown in Table 4 for both groups of student teachers prior to and after student teaching. Prior to student teaching compared to the older adults, the college-aged students had significantly greater self concerns about how pupils regarded them [$F(1, 36)=12.54$, $p < .001$] and more task concerns related to classroom discipline [$F(1, 36)=3.38$, $p < .058$]. After student teaching the college aged students had more self concerns than the older adults about how adults perceived them [$F(1, 36)=3.38$, $p < .07$]. The differences related to self concerns are attributable to significant decreases over the semester for the college aged group in their self concerns about pupil perceptions [$t_d(17)=2.54$, $p < .02$] and for the older adults group in their self concerns about perceptions [$t_d(19)=2.36$, $p < .03$]. The repeated measures analyses of variance

Table 3

Mean Level of Concerns (after George) of Student Teachers

	College Aged (n = 18)		Older Adult (n = 20)	
Concern	Pre	Post	Pre	Post
Self	4.06	4.02	3.82	3.34
Task	2.92	3.03	2.72	2.79
Impact	4.09	4.23	4.14	4.40

Table 4

Mean Level of Concern (after Adams et al.) of Student Teachers

	College Aged (n = 18)		Older Adult (n = 20)	
Concern	Pre	Post	Pre	Post
Self				
Pupil	3.24	2.85	2.33	2.42
Adult	3.98	4.02	3.87	3.42
Task				
Instructional	2.71	2.86	2.55	2.64
Discipline	3.78	3.75	3.30	3.29
Impact				
Academic	4.09	4.23	4.14	4.40
Environmental	3.42	3.53	3.18	3.46

demonstrate a significant interaction term for self concerns about adult perceptions [$F\ (1, 36)=4.27,\ p < .05$] and an interaction term that approaches significance for self concerns about pupil perceptions [$F\ (1, 36)=3.71,\ p < .06$]. No other statistical differences were found using the factors identified by Adams et al.

Discussion

The results of the analyses indicate that there are differences between the two groups of student teachers. On the whole these differences were more apparent in the analyses which employed the six factors identified by Adams et al. (Note 7, Note 8) lending support to that empirical determination of factors. The fact that most of the changes occurred within the self concerns dimension is not surprising. It verifies Fuller's (1969; Fuller & Bown, 1975) hypothesis that the initial classroom concerns of beginning teachers are self concerns. Student teachers are preoccupied with themselves and how their pupils and supervisors regard them. The fact that the mean self concerns (using George's and Adam's factors) declined over time again reflects Fuller's theory showing that with experience beginning teachers become more comfortable in their classroom and school interpersonal relations.

The finding that older adults are significantly less concerned than the college aged student teachers about classroom discipline reflects some of the descriptive differences between the two groups. With one exception all of the older student teachers had raised their own children. Only four of the college aged student teachers were married and none had children. The older adults did not approach student teaching with concerns about whether children would like them or if they could manage student's behaviors as did the younger student teachers. The impact of the experience of child rearing prepared the older adults for the classroom setting, but it was the classroom experience

which mollified the younger student teachers' concerns over the course of the semester.

The dimension of self concerns about adult perceptions declined after student teaching for the older adults and remained approximately the same for the college aged student teachers. Student teachers are well aware that their supervisors' and cooperating teachers' evaluations will determine, in large part, whether they will be recommended for teaching positions upon receipt of the teaching certificate. They are most concerned, then, about how adults perceive and evaluate them. This concern remains high for the younger student teachers throughout student teaching. However, as the older adults realize that they are interacting with evaluators close to their own ages - and in some cases, younger than they - they grow to respect them as experts in the field they are entering and are no longer threatened by them. The self-consciousness that accompanies evaluation diminishes for the older adult student teachers and this is reflected in their concerns scores.

On the whole the preoccupations of the student teachers are less strong for the older adults than the college aged students. They appear to have more confidence in their decisions to enter the profession and be in greater control of their actions in the classroom. This observation is elucidated by the interview data. The older student teachers had carefully selected teaching as a professional goal. All planned to pursue teaching positions after graduation. Some were making career changes. Others were returning to school after raising families. All had had varied and many experiences with children through parenting, substitute teaching, scouting, volunteer and religious school work. Many of the younger student teachers, in contrast, had entered college immediately after high school and had only had such experiences through their university coursework, babysitting, or summer camp counselor jobs. The

younger group were considering future career options. Many believed they would try teaching for a few years or use it as a fallback credential in the future. Only 25% of this group believed that teaching would involve them in the future for any lengtn of time.

According to Fuller (1969; Fuller & Bown, 1975) beginning teacners should be most preoccupied with self concerns and least with impact concerns. This is not the case in this data. Student teachers have the strongest concerns about the academic impact they have on their pupils, a finding commensurate with that of George and his coworkers (Note 11, Note 12), Adams et al. (Note 7) and Cooperstien (Note 9). Whether this trend can be explained by a social desirability factor as argued by George et al. (Note 12) remains an empirical question. More likely, professional programs are placing an increasingly strong emphasis on individualizing instruction and this emphasis is regarded seriously and with commitment by teacher trainees.

Given the items which are included in the task concerns related to instruction factor, it is not surprising that the concerns scores were low for both groups of student teachers. Student teachers are temporary guests in their cooperating teachers' classrooms and it is unlikely that they would feel administrative pressures related to academic freedom, increased class size, or routine and inflexibility. These concerns can be expected to increase only after teachers have had full responsibility for a class of students and to an administration for some time.

Conclusion

The results of this study offer a unique contribution to our knowledge of the teacher socialization process. Few studies are available which study changes in professional development over time; most are based on cross-sectional rather than longitudinal data. Few studies are available which examine indivi-

dual differences within the preservi e population; most assume homogeneity of this increasingly diverse group of individuals. As Fuller hypothesized (1969, Fuller & Bown, 1975) beginning teachers are concerned about themselves as teachers, but there are differences and changes during student teaching in the area of self concerns which demonstrate the import of examining individual differences within the preservice population. The preparing teachers in this study will enter their own classrooms with different concerns. Those in the college-aged group will continue to fear evaluative procedures and whether their students will accept them. They will be more concerned with sharpening their classroom management skills. The older adult group will be able to move forward with the business of teaching without such concerns. The inservice needs of the two groups may consequently differ in that survival may not be as strong a need for the older adults as it will for the younger teachers. It may also be necessary to provide more involving preclinical experiences for the college-aged students to help them acquire more self confidence and self-assuredness prior to their first teaching assignments. As the college student population becomes more heterogeneous, it is imperative that teacher education programs and continuing education programs be attentive and responsive to the capabilities and concerns that preparing and practicing teachers bring to their university coursework and their field-based experiences.

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